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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000332

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2019
TAGS: [POGV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [AJ](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: FM OSKANIAN CRITICIZES TURKEY-ARMENIA
NORMALIZATION PROCESS

REF: A. YEREVAN 306
[1](#)B. YEREVAN 307
[1](#)C. YERVAN 319

Classified By: Amabassador Marie Yovanovitch. Reason 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On May 5, Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian shared his critical views of Turkey-Armenia normalization. On content, he said that Armenia had traded away "genocide" recognition for illusory progress in Turkey-Armenia negotiations. Turkey, he claimed, is now holding Armenia hostage to a Nagorno-Karabakh resolution favorable to Azerbaijan. On process, Oskanian insisted Armenia had lost control of the Turkey-Armenia negotiations to Turkey, which is now meddling in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations. Oskanian,s views closely mirror those of others in Yerevan,s elite (Refs), but in his case, at least, there is more than a little bit of self-interest and a need to defend his own record. END SUMMARY.

Barn-Burning Speech Criticizing Rapprochement

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador spoke with former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian over lunch at the Residence on May 5. Oskanian shared highlights from a speech he delivered on Remembrance Day in Beirut, Lebanon, the heart of Armenian nationalism. Oskanian heavily criticized the April 22 Armenian Joint Statement with Turkey on normalizing relations and other overtures of the current Armenian Government toward Azerbaijan on resolving the status of Nagorno-Karabakh (N-K). In his speech(forwarded to CARC), Oskanian said that the proposal to establish a joint historical commission was simply another attempt by Turkey to manipulate Armenia into relinquishing "genocide" recognition. Oskanian noted that Turkey was more focused on the process rather than the substance that would govern normalizing relations with Armenia and that Turkey had already achieved its first success by staving off a U.S. recognition of the "genocide" for one more year. The most troubling aspect, according to Oskanian, was Turkey,s expectation of a Nagorno-Karabakh resolution and Turkey,s ability to now - after the April 22 joint statement - simply wait for a resolution on Azeri terms. He also stated that Armenia's willingness to renounce all territorial claims against Turkey must not include a concomitant abandonment of seeking justice for losing the lands it occupied for thousands of years.

"GENOCIDE" RECONITION IS NOT NEGOTIABLE

[1](#)3. (C) In his remarks to the Ambassador, Oskanian stated

that he supported normalizing relations with Turkey under the right conditions and that the current approach of the Armenian Government was ineffective and potentially dangerous for the country. Oskanian alleged that the Turks had manipulated the negotiation process in their favor and that they had no intention of de-linking resolution of N-K as a negotiating point prior to normalizing relations with Armenia.

14. (C) Oskanian cited the April 22 date of the Turkey-Armenia Joint Statement as a sign of this, since it preempted Remembrance Day, a hallowed time of Armenian Unity.

Oskanian said that if the timing of the statement was coincidental, it showed a callous disregard for Armenian collective emotions. If not, it represented a political blunder of enormous proportion, because it revealed that "genocide" recognition was now a matter for negotiation, and a matter of concern only an issue for the Diaspora, not Armenians, which he termed unacceptable. Oskanian stated that there had been no concrete success to speak of yet, and Turkey was now squarely in the middle of the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations and working with the Azeris against Armenia. Finally he stated that calling the process of normalization a "road map" was a bad idea due to the parallels it drew with the long and drawn-out Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY TO AVOID TURKISH TRICKS

15. (C) Rightly claiming the credit for starting bilateral

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talks through the Swiss Government, Oskanian noted that he had pursued the negotiations only on condition of absolute confidentiality. He said that he had always told his Turkish interlocutors that Armenia would deny all knowledge of negotiations if the Turkish Government prematurely tried to use the talks as a sign of progress. However, Oskanian assessed that the current Armenian Government had terribly miscalculated Turkish intent regarding the April 22 Joint Statement. The result, he said, it is that Armenia and President Sargsian were now under enormous pressure to deliver a Turkey-Armenia agreement that was favorable to both the Armenian populace and the Diaspora -- and clearly demonstrate that he is not selling out N-K. Oskanian stated that Turkey and the U.S. had now taken the initiative in the normalization process and had essentially left Armenia without control over current developments, a mistake former President Kocharian would never have made.

"I SUPPORT NORMALIZATION"

16. (C) Commenting on the N-K resolution process, Oskanian said that if Turkey opened the border without preconditions, it would actually ease Armenia's security demands and by extension its willingness to move forward productively in its talks with Azerbaijan. Oskanian argued that with an open border Turkey would be better positioned to play a constructive role in the region, but not before hand.

17. (C) While Oskanian heavily criticized the actions of President Sargsian, he did not believe that the current problems with the "road map" or Madrid process were insurmountable. He noted that all Turkey-Armenia issues are solvable with political will and diplomatic finesse. However, he noted that all further negotiations should be kept quiet, so not to allow Turkey the opportunity to manipulate the process and claim progress where there was none. Stating that the Dashaks had no choice but to resign from government due to the vociferous reaction against the joint statement among the party's patrons in the diaspora, he said the Dashnak departure did not cripple the ruling

coalition, but had further reduced the President's maneuvering room on Turkey and N-K.

COMMENT

18. (C) The understandable desire to defend his own record aside, Oskanian's views mirror the broad majority of Armenian elite thinking (reftels). Archrivals and former presidents, Kocharian and Ter-Petrossian have little in common, but on this, they at least publically agree. This means that President Sargsian has a uphill task in swinging Armenian support behind his Turkish-Armenia Rapprochement policy.
YOVANOVITCH